



American Youth
Policy Forum




Saving Summer Jobs: How Can Summer Youth Employment Programs Improve Youth Outcomes during COVID-19?


April 22, 2021 | 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm ET


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American Youth
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Quick Poll

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Preserving Summer Employment Opportunities for Inner-City Youth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Northeastern University
School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs

Since 2015, we have been conducting a **multi-year evaluation** of the Summer Youth Employment Program in partnership with the City of Boston.

1. Compare experiences of youth in the **treatment group relative to the control group** to determine impact on criminal justice, academic, and economic outcomes.
2. Link self-reported survey data to administrative records to determine **how behavioral changes during the summer lead to improvements in longer-term outcomes** 1-2 years later.
3. Disaggregate impacts to learn if SYEP **reduces inequality across SES, racial/ethnic groups**.

SHORT TERM (SUMMER):

Self-Reported Survey Data
Social-Emotional Learning
Community Engagement
Academic Aspirations
Job Readiness



LONG-TERM (1-2 YEARS LATER):

Administrative Records
Criminal Arraignments
Academic Outcomes
Employment and Wages

This evaluation has shown that **summer jobs improve behavioral, academic, and employment outcomes**, with greater impacts for black and brown youth.

Reduces crime by fostering community engagement and soft skills

- Improvements in soft skills linked to a **35% reduction in violent crime and a 29% fall in property crime** for the treatment group during the 18 months after program end.



Raises academic achievement through aspirations and work habits

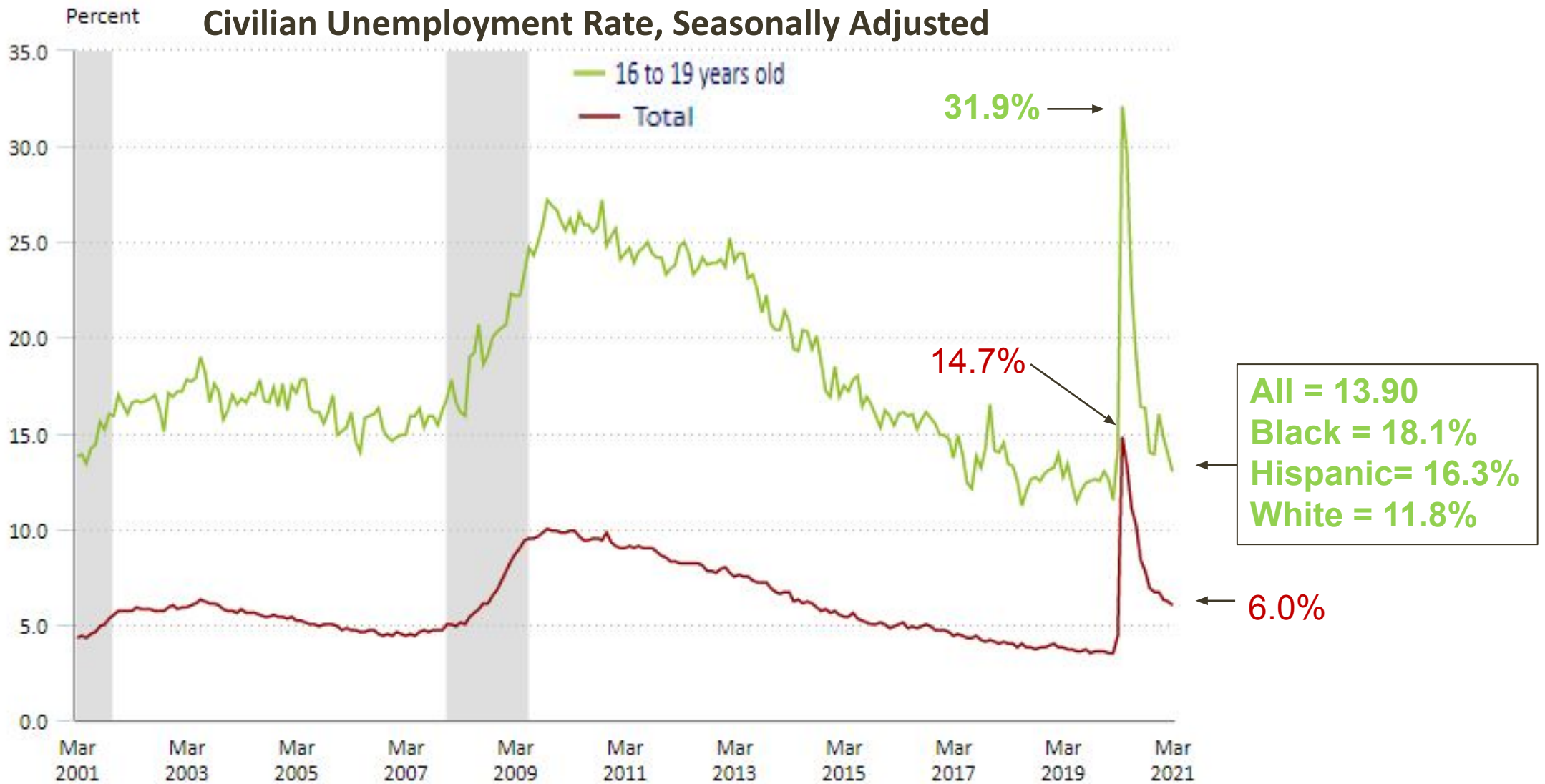
- Improvements in academic aspirations and work habits linked to a **4-percentage point increase in high school graduation rates** due to better attendance and grades.



Boosts employment through job readiness

- Improvements in job readiness skills linked to a **9-percentage point increase in employment and a 30 percent increase in wages** during the year following participation for opportunity youth of color ages 19-24 years.





Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

During summer 2020, Boston **invested an additional \$4.1 million** to support four new tracks that allowed youth to safely engage in meaningful activities.



Public Works Program: To provide youth with at least one in-person option, Boston expanded its public works programs to employ youth in maintenance of parks and other outdoor recreational spaces under appropriate COVID-19 safety measures.



Peer-to-Peer COVID-19 Campaign: To educate youth about COVID-19 and safe practices, Boston engaged youth in developing a peer-to-peer marketing campaign to disseminate public health messages.

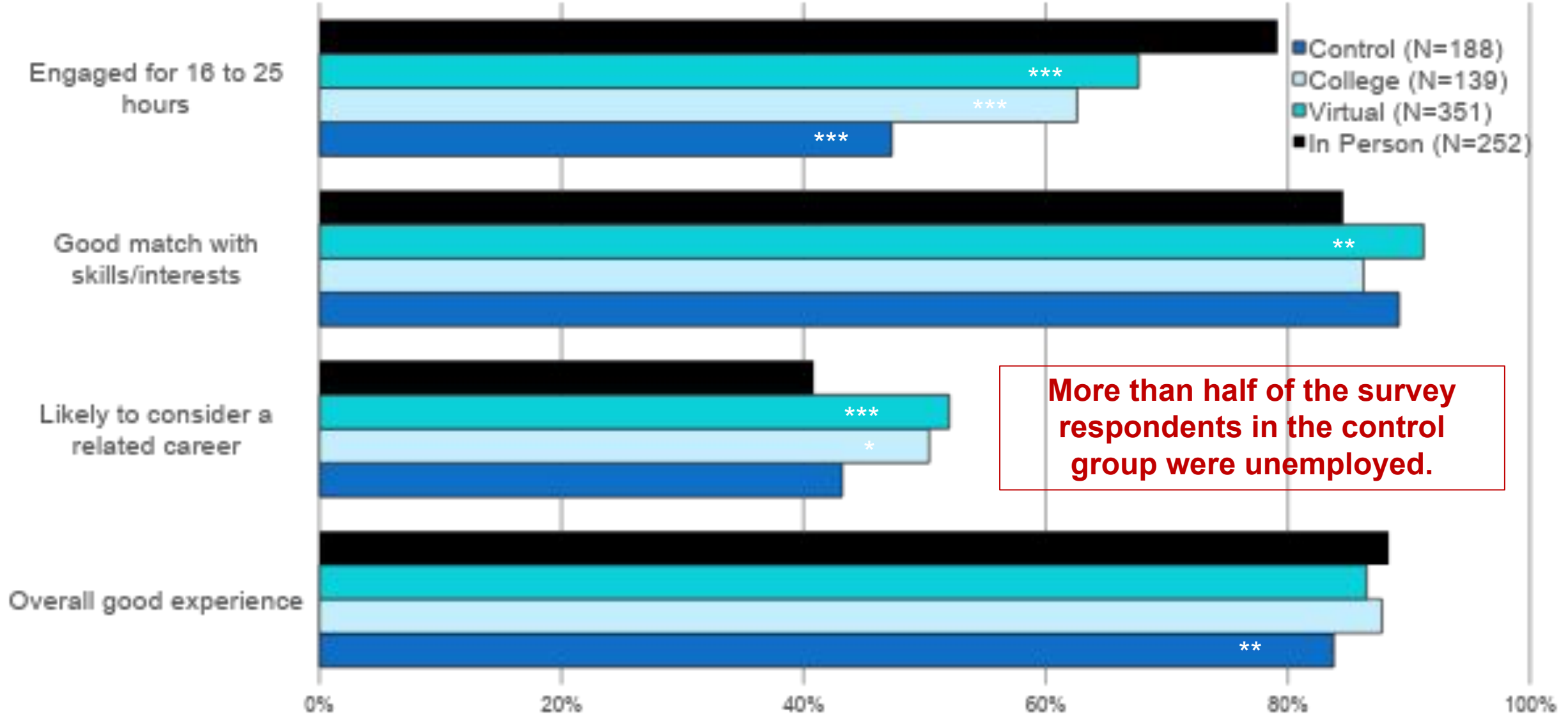


Earn and Learn: To ameliorate the learning loss from the school year, Boston negotiated agreements to enroll in college courses for credit and earn certifications such as Google's IT Support Professional certificate.



Virtual Internships: To help support companies and community based organizations take their summer jobs online, Boston supported a new platform developed by Northeastern University to provide ready-made projects and a dashboard to engage youth under the guidance of a manager or mentor.

Both the Virtual Internship and Learn and Earn tracks **provided similar, and in some ways superior, experiences** compared to the traditional in-person jobs.



More than half of the survey respondents in the control group were unemployed.

Source: Author's calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1% level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).

City of Boston Internships



Social Work/ Community Centers

Supporting younger students through digital lessons and instruction.

- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from local community centre
- Supervisor-assisted zoom tutoring/activity sessions
- 3 focus areas

SME Businesses and Non-Profits

Supporting local businesses to analyse or improve current practices.

- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from a local business
- Interns work on projects on various areas of the business
- 5 focus areas

Public Health Institutions

Analysing and supporting a local public health initiative.

- 2 roles: Intern & supervisor from a local organisation
- Interns work on projects on various areas of public health
- 4 focus areas

Internships Available



Gen-Z Engagement Analysis
Evaluate your organisation's social media strategy for Gen-Z audience



Technology Evaluation
Evaluate & conduct competitor analysis of a technology product



Social Media Administrator
Plan & execute a social media plan for the summer with Gen-Z audience in mind

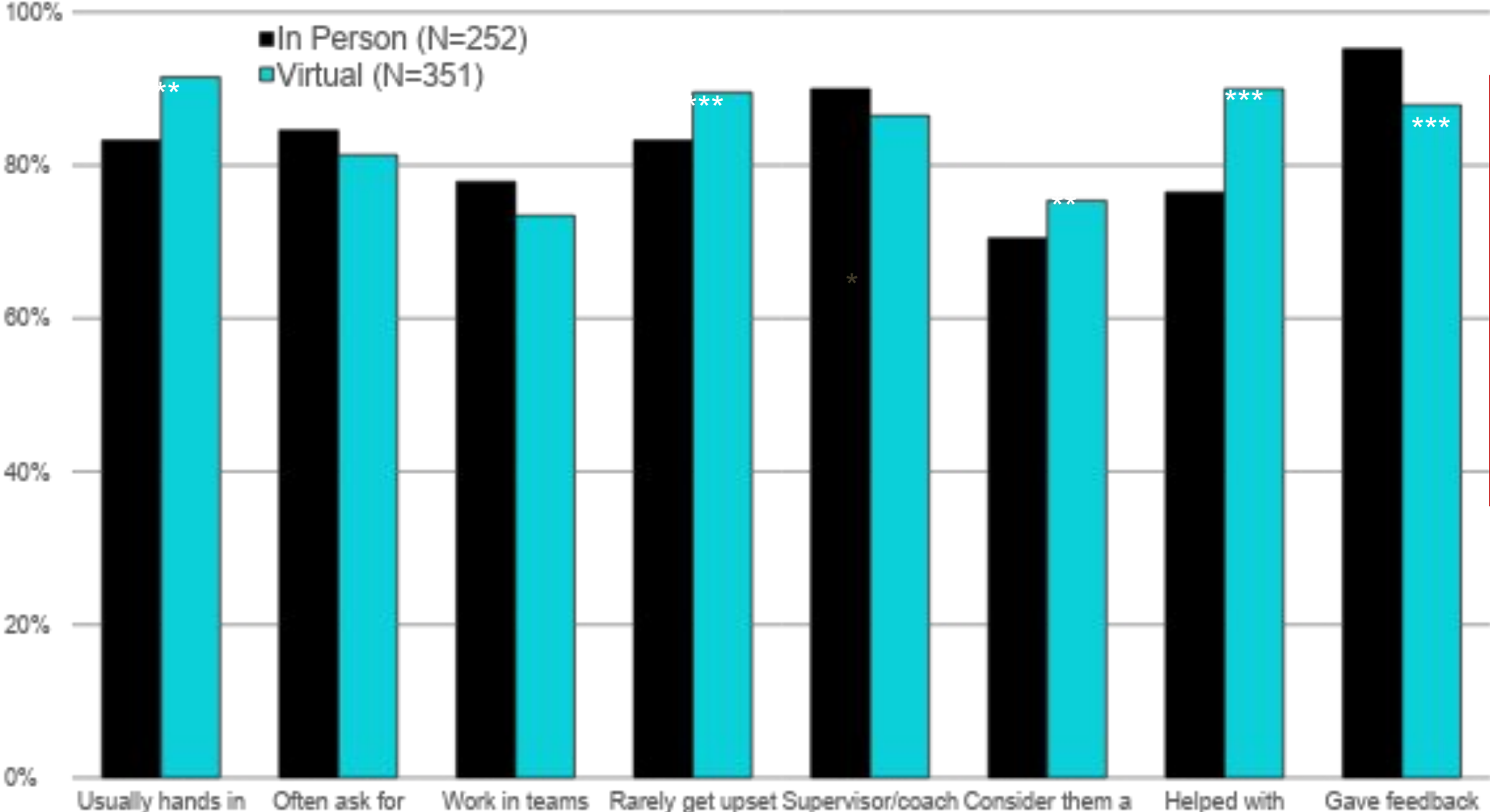


Graphic Design Assistant
Evaluate and recommend tools to improve visual appeal of marketing materials



Technology Quality Assurance
Test & report back on user experience of new technology product features

Youth in **virtual Internships** were as likely to develop strong work habits and soft skills as well as gaining a mentor compared to those with an in-person job.



Roughly 80% rated their experience with the Practera virtual internship platform as very good or good.

Source: Author's calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1% level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).

Summer “Learn and Earn” Program Elements

One-on-One Mentorship



Academic Support



Social Engagement



Weekly Life-Skills Webinars



Distance Learning



Guidance on career goals, academic performance, and life challenges.

Tutoring, mediation between professors and students, and reinforced class expectations.

Group check-ins and interactive, structured discussions on social justice topics.

Training in digital literacy, personal relationships, time management, and job-readiness skills.

Despite some challenges, increased digital literacy skills and provided time/ schedule flexibility.



City of Boston
Economic Development



Youth in the **Learn and Earn track** were 10 percentage points more likely to report planning to enroll in a four year college compared to the control group.

Summer College Course Outcomes

Completed	88%
Passed	78%
Failed	10%
Withdrew	12%

Increased Self-efficacy to Attend College

I knew it was going to be challenging because of all the things you need to know beforehand. But it showed me what I had to do.

Confirmed/Contradicted Impressions about a Field

I came out of this program, realizing that I don't want to do IT. But I still want to pursue something in tech.

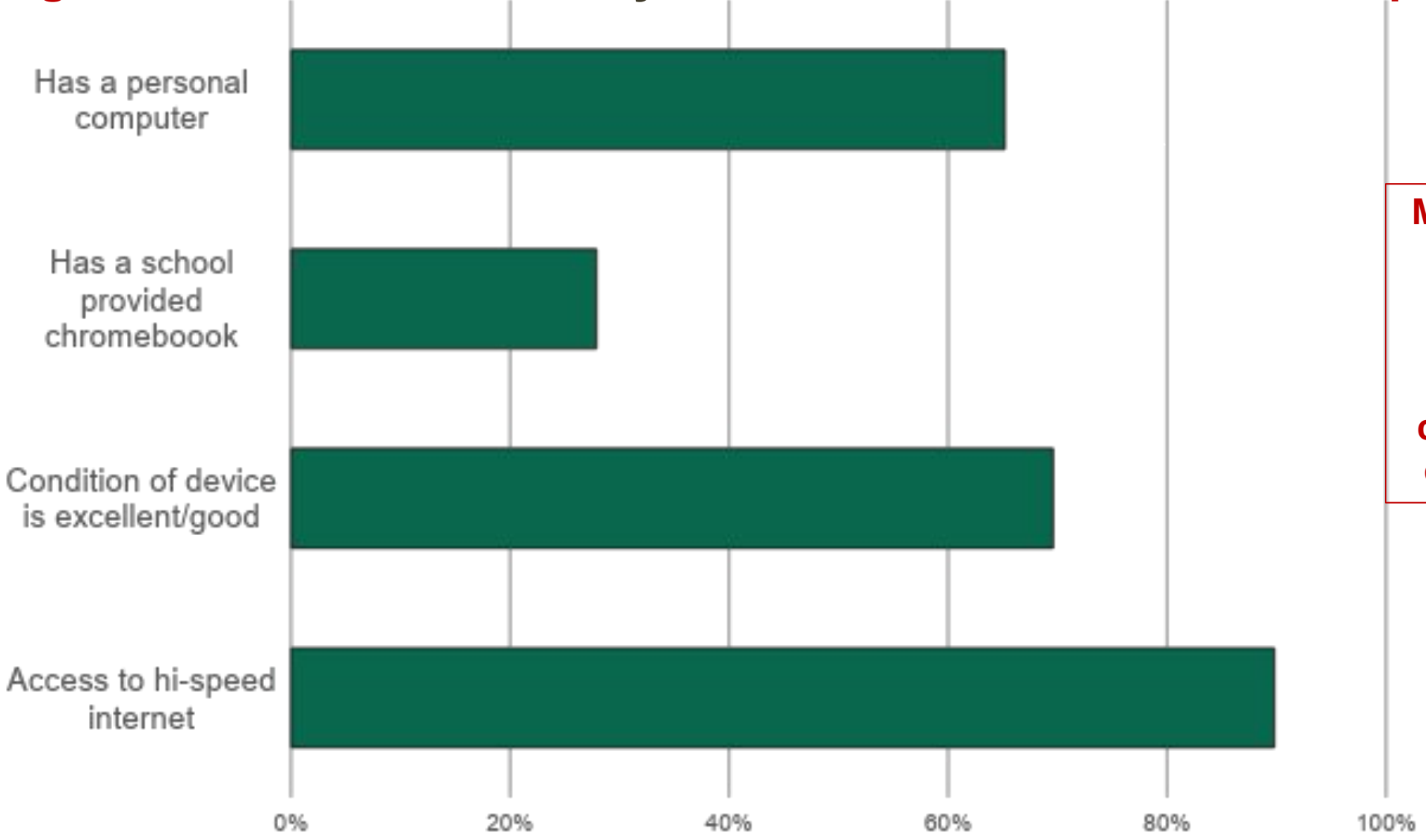
Raised Educational Aspirations

It made me think what I wanted to do in college. I'm happy that I have three credits now and most people don't.

Increased Self-Management Skills

It helped me keep a schedule for myself and keep my life in balance.

Although most participants had a device, it was not always in **good condition** and some youth did not have access to **hi-speed internet**.

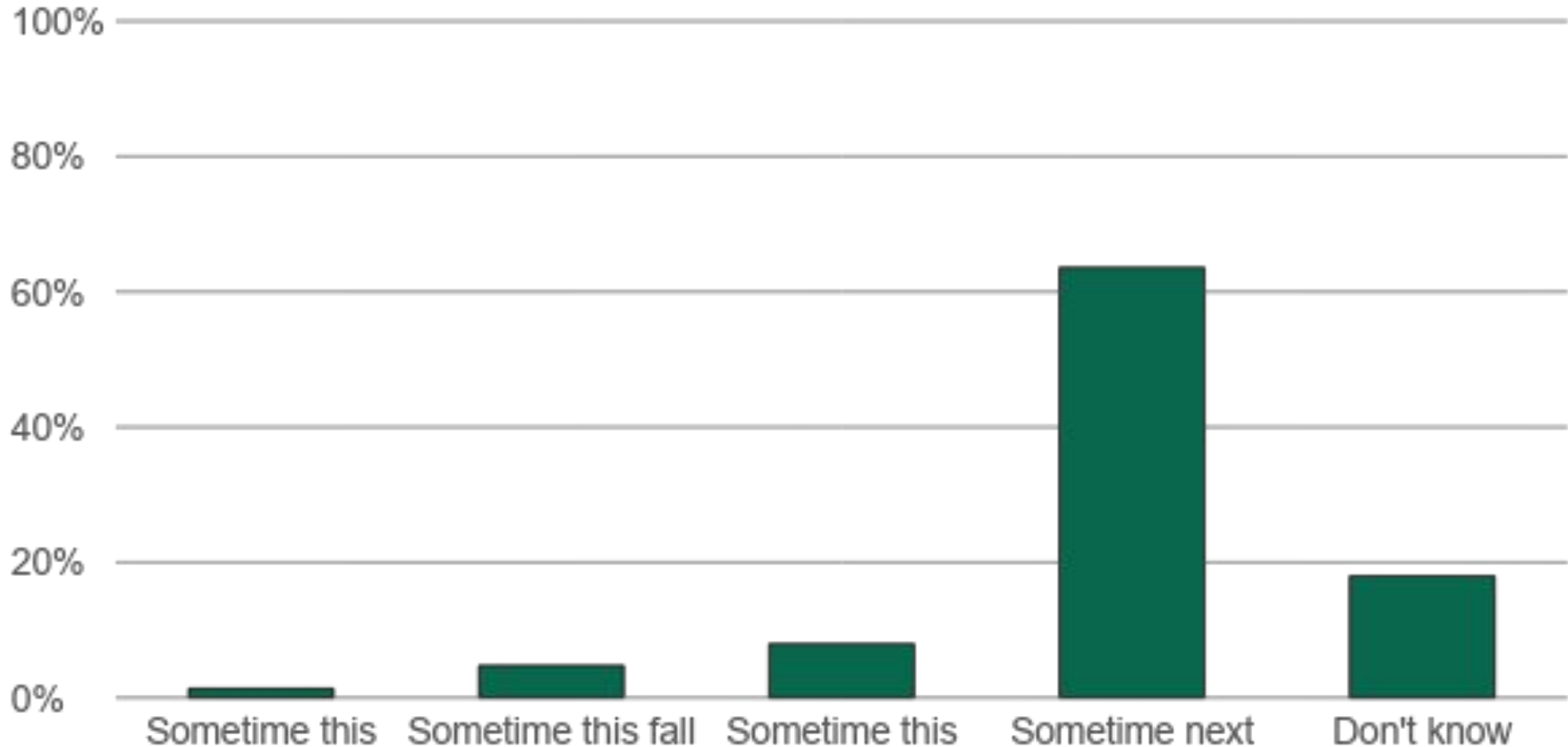


More than one in five youth in the Learn and Earn track reported that it was often or always challenging to find a quiet place to work.

Source: Author's calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1% level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).

The pandemic has taken a **tremendous toll on youth mental health** with 22 percent reporting symptoms of depression during 2020 compared to 10 percent in 2019.

When do you think things will return to "normal" after the COVID-19 pandemic?

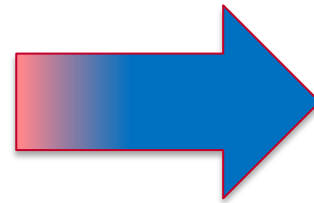


Source: Author's calculations using survey data collected from Youth Engagement and Employment summer jobs applicants.
Note: Difference relative to in-person group is statistically significant at the 1 % level (***), 5% level (**), and 10% level (*).

The Boston SYEP kept youth engaged and continued to build skills similar to prior years but more intentional design could **improve performance and equity**.

Recommendations

- Increase **engagement hours and feedback** from supervisor for virtual internships
- Add an **experiential component** to build job readiness and teamwork for learn and earn track.
- **Address mental health issues** by developing a plan for youth engagement and re-entry this summer.
- **Improve equity** by using technology to increase access to jobs and prepare youth for the workplace of the future.



Thank You!

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[@SasserModestino](https://twitter.com/SasserModestino)



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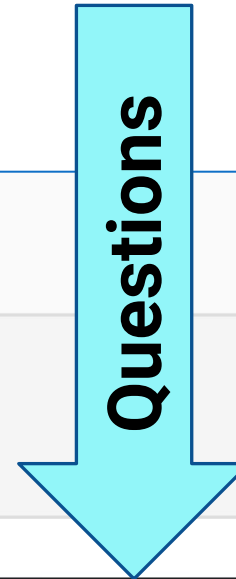


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Rashad O. Cope

Director of the Department of
Youth Engagement &
Employment, City of Boston



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Youth Participants

- Joseph Vann (SuccessLink Summer Jobs Participant)
- Nancy Nguyen (SuccessLink Summer Jobs Participant)


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Upcoming Event



Commonwealth
Learning
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Supporting Students Learning Through COVID-19: A Conversation With Big Picture Learning

Monday, April 26, 2021

4:00 PM - 4:45 PM ET